(d) As soon as the development of Surat Airport is completed (Expected to be completed by June, 2007), the airport will be ready for aircraft operations.

Opening of Karwar Airport for civilian air services

2884. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the State Government of Karnataka has requested the Central Government to open up the Karwar airport (Sea Bird Project) to civilian flights;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the local residents have already contributed substantially towards the land requirement of the Sea Bird Project;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether the State Government of Karnataka has requested the Central Government to bear the cost of acquiring the additional 75 hectares of land required for extending the runway and for its construction and maintenance; and

(f) if so, the details thereof and the Centre's response thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The State Government of Karnataka has requested to permit operation of civil flights of AB-320 type of aircraft at the proposed new airport associated with Project Seabird at Karwar of Indian Navy. The Indian Navy has asked for additional land from the State Government for extending the runway for operation of civil commercial flights of AB-320 aircraft. At the request of the State Government, Airports Authority of India (AAI) has carried out the site inspection and given suggestions regarding orientation/location of runway and extent of additional land required for extension of the proposed runway to 2500 m.

(c) and (d) The information is being collected.

(e) and (f) The State Government has informed that an additional 75 Ha.

of land is required to expand the naval airport at Karwar to facilitate operation of Civilian Commercial Flights. The cost of acquisition is estimated to be Rs. 20 crores. The State Government has requested that this cost be borne by the Central Government.

Establishment of a Civilian Enclave on Naval Airfield at Karwar depends on the airlines showing interest to fly through this airport and the State Government giving land to AAI free of cost.

Non-stop service between Mumbai and New York

2885. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Air India is going to start non-stop flights between Mumbai and New York from next year;

(b) if so, how this move would help to compete with Continental Airways, Delta Airways and American Airlines which are flying non-stop to India;

(c) whether it is a fact that the fare of the Air India is proposed to put higher than the above said airlines; and

(d) if so, how AI will be able to corner more and more passengers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir. Air India plans to start non-stop services between India and USA during summer 2007 after taking delivery of 3 new Ultra Long Range Aircraft B777-200LR in April/May, 2007.

(b) and (d) Although Continental Airways and American Airlines have a non-stop flight ex-Delhi to New york and Chicago respectively, however, direct competition would be with Delta Airlines who have a similar non-stop daily product Mumbai-New York-Mumbai. Air India has placed order for 8X B777-200LR state-of-the-art aircraft from Boeing. With the induction of 3 X B 777-200Lr aircraft by April/May, 2007, the non-stop services to USA would be on a daily basis which will be more attractive to passengers than one stop services and Air India is expected to achieve higher yield and load factors on these services with aggressive marketing.

(c) The fares to be charged by Air India on this route have not been decided.